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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tours Help Seniors & Families Explore Housing & Care Options**  
*Visits to Popular Senior Communities Scheduled for May-June*

SAN JOSE, CA (May 6, 2010) - It's one of the most familiar topics of discussion at any gathering of working adults these days – how to care for mom and dad. As baby boomers themselves age, the increasing care needs of their elderly parents and other loved ones are often accompanied by worry, stress, and fatigue. The emotional and physical demands can begin to take a toll on health, family life, and even job performance. In fact, with cost in lost productivity for full time employees with caregiving responsibilities estimated at \$17.1 to \$33.6 billion dollars annually, employers have much at stake in the eldercare discussion.\* It seems that everyone is looking for solutions.

According to Monica Farrier, who operates San Jose-based *Eldercare Scout*, families are too often forced into making important eldercare decisions when they are feeling overwhelmed, or when they must respond to a sudden decline in a loved one's health. There can be a lot of pressure to make the right choices under stress, particularly when those choices may have serious implications for family relationships and a loved one's care and quality of life, and often when he or she is most vulnerable. Decisions may be more complicated still when family members live in different parts of the country and don't have regular contact with each other or knowledge of local resources. It doesn't always have to be this way.

Recognizing the need to provide sensible alternatives to crisis-driven decisions, Farrier recently introduced group tours of senior communities in Santa Clara County. The monthly tours, which began in March, have been well-received by both families and senior community representatives, who welcome the opportunity to establish relationships with families and older adults early in the search process. As with so many important decisions, those who plan and take the opportunity to explore what's out there are in the best position to make the right choices if and when the time comes.

"People drive by these places and see the signs, but often don't understand what's behind them," says Farrier. "From the curb they may look very similar when in reality the services they offer may vary." Assisted living communities offer help with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and medication management, and may also have special units for residents who have Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. These facilities differ significantly from both independent retirement communities and nursing homes. "It's not easy to get a true sense of a community from looking at a brochure or website," Farrier says. "Each has a 'personality' of its own. Families really owe it to themselves to tour. They are often very surprised by what they discover." An added benefit of visiting together is that it can lead to important family discussions about eldercare before there's an immediate need to make decisions.

To help tour participants evaluate what they are seeing when they visit, Farrier provides a list of suggested questions to ask and criteria to keep in mind. “It’s all about making informed choices,” she says. “Not everyone thinks they want to live in a senior community, but with life’s surprises it’s still best to be prepared,” she says.

Farrier especially enjoys having older adults on the tours who are considering moving from homes that no longer meet their needs, or who are planning to move to the area from other states in order to be closer to their children and grandchildren. “There are many different reasons why people might consider residential communities,” she says. “Even if they don’t have care needs, many people benefit from the social environment that a community can offer. Services such as meals, transportation, and security can also simplify life and provide a safer environment.”

Upcoming tours in May and June include many popular communities, beginning with The Atrium in San Jose on May 12. Tours may include lunch and/or special activities. Interested participants must register so that group size can be limited for the best possible experience. For more information or to register, call **408/338-5447** or visit [www.eldercarescout.com](http://www.eldercarescout.com).

*\* According to research conducted by Metlife Mature Market Institute*

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